



News Release

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DGS Scientist Discusses Public Health Infrastructure During Congressional Hearing *~ emphasizes need for increased, sustained federal funding ~*

RICHMOND, VA – The Department of General Services (DGS) today announced that Dr. Marilyn Bibbs Freeman, Deputy Director of its Division of Consolidated Laboratory Services (DCLS), spoke on the importance of federal funding for public health at a U.S. House Appropriations subcommittee hearing yesterday. Bibbs Freeman emphasized how increased and sustained federal funding would lead to much-needed data modernization and workforce recruitment and retention within public health laboratories.

She outlined that the attrition challenge of public health laboratories is due in part to a retiring workforce and millennials intending to leave within five years. In addition, public health does not offer competitive salaries compared to the private sector she said. Federal funding could be used to combat these critical issues and would help ensure the success of public health today and in the future explained Bibbs Freeman.

“The recruitment and retention of a diverse, qualified workforce to alleviate attrition due to retirement or resignation ensures that knowledge not only enters the field but also remains here,” **said Bibbs Freeman**. “Also, productivity and performance are amplified when the workforce is composed of diverse talent.”

She went on to explain how using federal dollars to modernize data would make public health more efficient, sustainable and proactive when dealing with a crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic.

“A continued ongoing funding strategy that takes into account yearly inflation for supplies, market comparisons and other direct and indirect cost increases of doing business is needed to maintain all elements of data modernization incrementally over time, instead of more costly, less efficient, instantaneous overhauls as we are doing now,” **said Bibbs Freeman**.

In her role as Deputy Director of DCLS, Bibbs Freeman works closely with DCLS Director Dr. Denise Toney on both day-to-day operations and long-term succession and sustainability for the lab. Bibbs Freeman holds a Bachelor of Science in biology from James Madison University and a Master of Science in clinical laboratory sciences from Virginia Commonwealth University. She earned her Doctor of Philosophy degree from Walden University in public health with a concentration in epidemiology.

Bibbs Freeman has been in her role as deputy director at DCLS since 2019 and has held various other positions at DCLS over her 19-year tenure. She has more than 20 years of progressive experience in microbiology, immunology, chemistry, quality, safety and management. She is a member of the Association of Public Health Laboratories (APHL) and serves as the chair of their Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Task Force.

“Dr. Bibbs Freeman is not only an asset to DGS and Virginia’s public health laboratory, she is an advocate for the greater public health community,” **said Toney**.

“We are lucky to have Dr. Bibbs Freeman as part of the DGS team,” **said DGS Director Joe Damico**. “In her role as Deputy Director of DCLS, she will continue to improve outcomes for Virginia’s public health lab and our citizens and will bring to light challenges and propose solutions to better DCLS.”

“I am grateful to Dr. Bibbs Freeman for bringing her expertise and leadership to DCLS,” **said Secretary of Administration Grindly Johnson**. “She serves as a great role model to students in STEM, specifically young women and minorities interested in the public health field.”

To watch Bibbs Freeman’s full statement, visit <https://appropriations.house.gov/events/hearings/ready-or-not-us-public-health-infrastructure>.

DCLS performs more than 9 million tests annually to identify genetic and metabolic disorders in newborn children and to detect infectious agents and toxic chemicals in humans, animals, the environment, the food we eat and the water we drink.

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